

# County Line

News from the Government Offices of Lumpkin County, Georgia

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## Stationed for Best Response



Lumpkin County finishes out 2007 with the completion of its fourth new fire station in six years. Station No. 4, on Chesterra Road just south of the GA 400/Highway 60 interchange, gives special cause for celebration.

Overcoming a history of false starts and numerous delays, it finally was completed in December, on budget and ready to house the fire truck, tanker, ambulance and crew that will be based there. The three-bay facility, with an attractive split-face rock façade, features administrative space, residential quarters and a training room. Station No. 4 is strategically located to improve response times to fires, traffic incidents and other emergencies in the southern part of the county. After a state certificate is issued, the ISO, or Insurance Services Office, will evaluate the facility and give it a rating between 1 (best) and 10. It is hoped the new facility will improve Lumpkin County's overall rating. Since ISO ratings are considered by many home insurance companies in setting insurance premiums, lower ISO ratings could mean insurance premium savings for some homeowners and businesses.

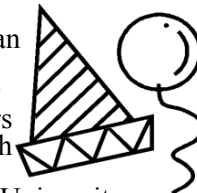
## Book Review: Budget in Brief

County Manager Stan Kelley's latest book is a must-read for anyone seeking a concise, easy-to-understand explanation of Lumpkin County's budget. Based on real numbers, graphs and charts from the actual Fiscal Year 2008 Operating and Capital Budget, *Budget in Brief* reviews the budgeting process, explores significant FY08 budget issues and shows how revenues will be generated and spent in the coming year. Special sections on property and sales taxes round out the 22-page, 5"X8" publication, the first of its kind put together for local citizens. In the Foreword, Kelley credits Finance Director Allison Martin and her staff for their support. Available in paperback at the Board of Commissioners Office in the county courthouse. No charge.



## Happy Birthday, Lumpkin County

An enthusiastic crowd gathered recently in Lumpkin County for an old fashioned birthday party of historic proportions. And the honoree was not the least bit shy about her age. Lumpkin County turned 175 Dec. 3. The Lumpkin County Board of Commissioners marked the anniversary of the county's establishment in 1832 with a ceremony at the Dahlonega Gold Museum. Highlights included Presentation of the Colors by the North Georgia College & State University Corps of Cadets Color Guard, singing of The National Anthem by Lumpkin County fifth-grader Kayla Leigh Armstrong, performances by the Lumpkin County High School Band of Gold and chorus, an invocation by Rev. Dean Bryant and the reading of a Proclamation by Commission Chairman Steve Gooch. Doc Johnson of the Mountain Music and Medicine Show served as emcee. Following the singing of Happy Birthday, birthday cake was served while Jim White, Curtis Jones, Dobbin Buck, Holly Jones and others played Appalachian music in the background. Topping off the festivities, several of the county's older citizens, including 104-year-old Mary Otway and ninety-somethings Lula Bell Sullens, Woodrow Parks, Lucy Merritt and Jewell West, were recognized and given special county coins as keepsakes. News of Lumpkin County's special party made the front page of The Dahlonega Nugget and was shared across the region through newspaper, television and Internet coverage.



## Drought Response: A Community Effort

Lumpkin County and the Lumpkin County Water & Sewerage Authority have joined with the City of Dahlonega and local residents and business leaders to form the Community Drought Management Partnership. The goal is for the community to work together to conserve water and minimize the impacts of the drought. A special partnership publication, *Down the*



*Pipeline*, summarizes the serious challenges we face and steps being taken to cope. It was distributed in the Dec. 12 edition of The Dahlonega Nugget. Copies are available online and at locations around the community. Call (706) 867-6580 for details.

## 'Tis the (Tax) Season

Lumpkin County's property tax bills went out later than usual this year due to an extraordinarily large number of property assessment appeals that slowed the process down, delaying the printing of the tax digest, the setting of the millage rate and the approval of the 2008 budget. However, the bills did go out at the end of November and are due on Jan. 31, 2008. If you want to get credit (and a deduction on your federal tax return) for paying your tax in 2007 and plan to stop by the Tax Commissioner's Office in the courthouse to pay in person, remember the office will be closed Dec. 24 and 25 (Jan. 1, too). If you pay after the due date, call (706) 864-2666 to get the exact amount due, as interest will be added on at that point.



## Meetings Called to Order at 6pm

Make a note: The Lumpkin County Board of Commissioners has changed its regular board meeting schedule for 2008. Beginning in January, regular monthly board meetings, at which the commissioners take official action on agenda items, will be changed from 7pm to 6pm, still on the third Thursday of each month. The change will reduce overtime costs for staff members required to be at the board meetings. Work sessions, held the first Thursday of each month to discuss issues and set the agendas for the board meetings, will still be held at 9am. Daytime hours are best for the work sessions since these meetings can last many hours.



## (Holi)days Off for County Employees

The Lumpkin County Government offices will be closed on Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 24 and Dec. 25 for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and on Tuesday, Jan. 1 for New Year's Day. Best wishes to you and yours for a joyous holiday season!



## Lumpkin County . . . continued from reverse side

### Primarily Speaking

The Democratic and Republican Primaries will be held Feb. 5 in Georgia, along with, in Lumpkin County, a referendum on liquor by the drink. If you need help figuring out the whats, whens and wheres of the upcoming elections, Lumpkin County elections supervisor Kimberly Pruitt says her office is ready to help. Don't wait 'til the last minute to ask, though, or you may miss important dates or deadlines. You'll find all kinds of information on the county website (go to [www.lumpkincounty.gov](http://www.lumpkincounty.gov), click on Dept. and Contact Info and scroll to Election and Voter Registration Office). If you'd rather talk to someone in person, call (706-864-6279) or stop in the office at the county courthouse.



• **When to vote.** Election Day is Feb. 5. All polls will be open from 7am to 7pm. Advance voting (for convenience, no reason necessary) will be held during regular business hours Jan. 28 to Feb. 1 at the Mountain Education Center, 51 Mountain View Drive, behind Lumpkin County Middle School. Absentee voting (reason needed) takes place between Dec. 26 and Feb. 1, either in person at the Mountain Education Center or absentee by mail, for which you can download an application, pick one up from the Elections office or call and request that one be mailed.

• **Where to vote.** If it's been a few years since you voted, double check your polling place. Some sites have changed since the last Presidential Primary. Yahoola Precinct: You get to vote at your new polling place for the first time. It's at Fire Station No. 3, formerly the US Forest Service Yahoola Work Center.

• **Which ballot?** To vote in the Presidential Primaries, ask for a ballot based on your party preference; that ballot also will include the distilled spirits referendum question. If you aren't voting in the Primaries, simply ask for a non-partisan ballot; it will have only the distilled spirits question.

• **Photo ID.** You *will* need that government-issued photo identification: Georgia driver's license (valid or expired) or a valid state or federal issued ID card, US passport, government employee photo, military ID or Tribal ID. If you have no acceptable form of photo ID, you can have one made—stamped for voting use only—at the Lumpkin County Elections Office free of charge.

### Landlords R Us

Lumpkin County Magistrate Judge Jeff Lowe sees plenty of landlords and tenants in his office because one or the other didn't understand or fulfill the lease terms. He figures some basic education could change that and will hold an informal information session for local landlords if there's enough interest to justify it. If you handle residential or commercial rentals in Lumpkin County and would be interested in such a session, call Judge Lowe's office (706-864-7760).



### Plan to Reward, Retain Staff

A good day's wage for a good day's work—oh, and how about equal pay for the same work? Just a couple of reasons to keep a good job. And they're among the reasons the Lumpkin County Board of Commissioners this fall adopted a job classification plan and a compensation plan for the county's civil service employees. The system analyzes all county jobs considering nine basic factors and overlays that information with a formula based on market conditions, service and performance to



### Access to the Polls

Lumpkin County's Election and Voter Registration Office has made much progress in improving the county's polling places. This year, thanks to federal grant money, they significantly improved access to the polls for citizens with physical disabilities.



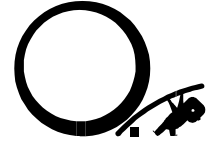
Voters going to the polls in February will find designated handicapped accessible parking, improved entrances and exits and safe ramps and sidewalks. The next challenge: providing handicapped access to the facilities' restrooms, work not covered by the 2007 grant award.

### Code Enforcement Gives Teeth to Ordinances

Think of code enforcement like this: It protects us and preserves our good quality of life. Without it, ordinances passed by our board of commissioners have no "teeth." Major strides were made in Lumpkin County's commitment to code enforcement in 2007, when Dennis Roland was named Infrastructure Inspector and Code Enforcement Officer.



determine pay. County manager Stan Kelley and Human Resources director Fran Sullens researched the idea, believing it would help reward and retain the county's loyal and competent employees. They got technical input from UGA's Carl Vinson Institute of Government before recommending the plan to the commissioners in October. The commissioners not only supported the plans in concept; they backed that support by putting money in the budget to adjust employee pay upward as indicated by the plan in 2008.



### Working for You!

If you have a problem, question or concern involving your county government, answers and assistance are as close as your phone or computer. For contact information for county departments or commissioners, see Dept. and Contact Info., [www.lumpkincounty.gov](http://www.lumpkincounty.gov) or call (706) 864-3742.

### Board of Commissioners

Steve Gooch, Chairman  
Dr. John Raber, District 1  
Deborah Hutcheson, District 2  
Clarence Stowers, District 3  
Clarence Grindle, District 4

Stan Kelley  
County Manager

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Although some code enforcement duties had been rolled into his job before that, no one had ever officially served in the capacity. There are hundreds of local ordinances on the books, which collectively make up The Lumpkin County Code. They set forth rules, regulations and penalties for everything from wiring, plumbing and soil erosion for building and remodeling projects to offsite and temporary signage to littering and dumping. Dennis makes sure people follow the rules, and he ensures the integrity of roads and pipelines that will be turned over to the county. When Dennis, who has completed intensive certification training, encounters violations, he tries to help people understand the codes and voluntarily comply. If they don't cooperate and that voluntary compliance just isn't happening, he has the authority to write citations that are enforceable through the courts.